

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 924

By Curtiss

A RESOLUTION to honor the citizens of White County,
Tennessee, on the 200th anniversary of the
county's formation.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause in its deliberations to join with the citizens of the cities and counties that comprise this great State in celebrating joyous and historic occasions; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of White County are most assuredly deserving of special recognition, as they commemorate their county's bicentennial; and

WHEREAS, much of the land embraced by White County had been granted by the State of North Carolina to veterans of the Revolutionary War; John White, the county's namesake, was a Revolutionary War soldier, fifer, surveyor, and frontiersman who left Amelia County, Virginia, in 1789, and moved his family to the Cumberland Mountains in what is now Tennessee; John White fought the Cherokee Indians for the right to live on the land, and soon, dozens of hardy pioneers, struck by the beauty and promise of the land, came to the "Mountain District"; and

WHEREAS, the young nation's westward movement continued, and in 1815, a highway was opened between Knoxville and Nashville; hundreds of settlers passed through the area, regularly winding their way down the side of the mountain in four and six-horse stage coaches; Bon Air Springs, on this highway, developed as the first resort area in the South, offering spectacular views to antebellum pleasure seekers; and

WHEREAS, in 1806, a petition for county organization, signed by 155 residents, was presented to the General Assembly in Knoxville, and on September 11, 1806, White County was formed, partitioned from Smith and Jackson Counties; it was a huge area, encompassing

all of what is now White and Warren Counties, and parts of the counties of Cannon, Coffee, DeKalb, Franklin, Grundy, Putnam, and VanBuren; and

WHEREAS, the county court of White County was organized in February of 1807, at the house of Joseph Terry, near Rock Island, on the Caney Fork River; Joseph Terry was chosen clerk, William Phillips, sheriff, and John Dergan, register; the circuit court of White County was also organized at Joseph Terry's house in 1807, by Judge Nathaniel Williams, who appointed Archibald W. Overton as clerk of the court; and

WHEREAS, on October 18, 1809, the General Assembly passed an act to establish a permanent seat of justice for White County; the act provided for the calling and holding of an election for the selection of seven commissioners whose duties would be the locating of a county seat, which town should be called Sparta, the surveying and laying off into lots of said town, the selling of such lots, and the erection of the necessary county buildings; and

WHEREAS, a site on the Calfkiller River was immediately chosen for the town of Sparta, but being unable to agree upon which side of the river to locate the town, the commissioners submitted the question to the people of White County, who chose the east side; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Supreme Court met in White County, first at Rock Island, and later at Sparta, and for several years, with Andrew Jackson serving as one of the presiding judges, White County's old log courthouse was the scene of many able and eloquent discussions; and

WHEREAS, in 1810, Eli Sims, a native of Ireland, established the county's first cotton gin, and in 1824, he and his slaves built a two-story brick house that still stands today outside of Sparta and is recognized as the county's first brick dwelling; and

WHEREAS, when the United States War Department made a requisition on the State of Tennessee for 2,500 men to serve in the War of 1812, White County contributed two full companies, and during the Mexican War, the county volunteered one company; White County contributed nine full companies to the Confederacy and one company to the Union during the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, White County contained valuable natural resources in coal and timber, which were exploited fully from the 1880s to the Great Depression; coal mines and towns were

established at Eastland, Ravenscroft, Clifty, DeRossett, and Bon Air, touching the lives of thousands of residents; Bon Air Coal Company owned at least 38,000 acres and employed 600 men from White and Cumberland counties; by 1920, White County was the sixth leading coal producer in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, lumber was taken in vast amounts during the early twentieth century, at first in support of the continual mining expansion and then as a resource in its own right, with the Sparta Spoke Factory being one of the region's largest consumers; during World War I, White County walnut was in great demand for gun stocks by both the Allied nations and the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Sparta grew markedly during these decades of industrial investment, and its historic district contains many popular architectural styles of the early twentieth century, including Queen Anne, Bungalow, Four-Square, and Classical Revival dwellings; and

WHEREAS, White County's famous residents include bluegrass legend Lester Flatt, a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, and Earl Webb, Major League Baseball record holder for most doubles in a season; and

WHEREAS, as White County begins its third century, its vibrant economy, low crime rate, and emphasis on education have enticed many commercial and industrial businesses to choose White County for their operations; Federal Mogul, Wilson Industries, Genlyte-Thomas, and BASF are only a few of the many companies with White County facilities; and

WHEREAS, a land blessed with abundant natural beauty, White County is nestled between some of the most gorgeous land, mountains, and lakes in the state; nearby recreational areas include the Calfkiller and Caney Fork rivers, Virgin Falls State Natural Area, Burgess Falls State Natural Area, and Rock Island State Park; and

WHEREAS, White County is one of the great counties in Tennessee; it has been a catalyst for positive change in our State and in our Nation throughout its illustrious existence; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor this fine county and its citizenry as they commemorate this significant milestone in their historic existence; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED
FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE
CONCURRING, that we honor and applaud the progress made by the dedicated citizens and
leaders of White County throughout the past 200 years and extend to them our best wishes for
the county's every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared
for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.